F.4 Child protection

Children First Family Mediation	
Title	Safeguarding and child protection policy and procedures
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Issued	March 2010 – Updated August 2010 January 2012 January 2017 and 2019
Reviewed	January 2013, January 2014, January 2015, January 2016, January 2017 and January 2019 January 2021 January 2023 January 2024 Major rewrite January 2025

Safeguarding and child protection policy and procedures for Children First Family Mediation (*referred to as "The Service or CFFM")*

Note : separate policy for Vulnerable Adults

Policy statement

The primary responsibility for safeguarding children and young people rests with their parents/carers. However safeguarding children is the responsibility of everyone and this policy describes the actions needed by all those undertaking work for CFFM and the need for all to be alert to any risks to children and take appropriate action.

This policy addresses 3 main aspects of safeguarding:

a. Ensuring that those who undertake work for CFFM do not pose any risk to children
b. Ensuring that all those who undertake work for CFFM fully understand their safeguarding responsibilities
c. Safeguarding practice in the delivery of the Mediation service to ensure that action is taken promptly when necessary to ensure the protection of children or vulnerable adults

Definition of Safeguarding Children and young people

Safeguarding is the action that is taken to promote the welfare of children and protect them from harm. Safeguarding means: protecting children from abuse and maltreatment; preventing harm to children's health and/or development; ensuring children grow up with the provision of safe and effective care. (NSPCC)
Abuse is a form of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Harm can include ill treatment that is not physical as well as the impact of witnessing ill treatment of others. This can be particularly relevant, for example, in relation to the impact on children of all forms of domestic abuse, including where they see, hear, or experience its effects. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or extra-familial contexts by those known to them or, more rarely, by others. Abuse can take place wholly online, or technology may be used to facilitate offline abuse. Children may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children. (Working Together 2023)

Our Commitment
Principles

- Children and young people should never experience abuse of any kind
- We have a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children and young people, to keep them safe and to practice in a way that protects them.
- We recognise that: the welfare of the child is paramount
- all children, regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation have a right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse
- some children are additionally vulnerable because of the impact of previous experiences, their level of dependency, communication needs or other issues
- working in partnership with children, young people, their parents, carers, and other agencies is essential in promoting young people's welfare

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We will seek to keep children and young people safe by:

a. appointing a nominated child protection/safeguarding lead, and a lead trustee/board member for safeguarding
b. developing child protection and safeguarding policies and procedures which reflect best practice
c. using our safeguarding procedures to share concerns and relevant information with agencies who need to know, and involving children, young people, parents, families and carers appropriately
d. making our safeguarding duties clear on our website, service descriptions etc
e. implementing a code of conduct for staff and volunteers
f. using our procedures to manage any allegations against staff and volunteers appropriately
g. ensuring that we have effective complaints and whistleblowing measures in place
h. Recording and storing information professionally and securely

Legal Framework
This policy has been drawn up based on legislation, policy and guidance that seeks to protect children in England. A summary of the key legislation/guidance used is shown below:

The Children's Act 1989
The Children's Act 1989 provides a comprehensive framework for the care and protection of children.
The Children's Act 2004 supplemented the 1989 Act and reinforced the message that all organisations working with children have a duty in helping safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
Working Together (revised 2023)
.This new edition of Working together is central to delivering on the strategy set out in Stable homes, built on love (2023), which outlines the Government's commitment to support every child to grow up in a safe, stable and loving home.

What to do if You are Worried a Child is being Abused(Government Guidance 2015)
The Data Protection Act 2018 and GDPR regulations – this explains the rules regarding information sharing and permission for this if a child is at risk
Information Sharing – Advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services to vulnerable children, young people, parents and carers (2015)
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safeguarding-practitioners-information-sharing-advice

Organisational Aspects
The Designated Safeguarding Lead
Sheena Adam Director and Practice supervisor is the designated Safeguarding Lead. She will liaise with any Local Authority Designated Officer(LADO) regarding any allegations against staff for the 10 local authorities for Greater Manchester ; deal with any safeguarding concerns raised by staff to ensure prompt and effective referrals wherever the child is living and organise staff training in safeguarding
Trustee lead
Hannah Kinder is re lead trustee for safeguarding
She will oversee organisational and policy aspects

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1. Staff and potential risk to children

1.1 Staff (employed, self employed or volunteers) who will have any direct contact with parents and children will all be required to have up to date Criminal Records Bureau/Disclosure and Barring checks which will be renewed every 3 years.

1.2 All staff will be required to immediately bring it to the attention of the service director if they consider that any member of staff is acting in a way to put a child at risk.

1.3 If it is established that any member of staff has put a child at risk they would be prevented from receiving any future work from the Service and their actions reported to the appropriate authorities liasing with the designated LADO.

2. Ensuring staff fully understand their safeguarding responsibilities

2.1 All CFFM staff will be asked to sign that they have read and understood this safeguarding policy and that they are aware of the actions needed to protect children

2.2 All CFFM staff will be required to be familiar with the following resources and legislation:

- What to do if your are worried a child is being abused (Department for Education and Skills 2015)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (HM Government 2023)
- Local Children's services Safeguarding and child protection procedures

- Government guidance on Information sharing(*Information sharing: guidance for practitioners and managers, HM Government 2008*)
- The Children Act 1989 and 2004
- The NSPCC Helpline for consultations re: child protection concerns
- Manchester Multi agency Safeguarding arrangements https://www.manchestersafeguardingpartnership.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/2024-MMASA-FINAL-3-.pdf

2.3 All new mediators will undertake initial safeguarding training provided by CFFM and the appropriate Local Safeguarding Children's Board or NSPCCC(unless they are already trained social workers or health professionals with recent child protection experience)

2.4 All practitioner staff will receive regular safeguarding training updates at least every 3 years.

2.5 Administrative staff will undertake safeguarding training commensurate with their role to enable them to identify safeguarding concerns in their contact with clients and report them appropriately.

3. Safeguarding and service delivery

3.1 It must be made clear to all service users that the general promise of confidentiality within mediation and GDPR requirements re; restrictions in disclosing personal data, do not prevent the mediator or any other staff disclosing information where there is substantial risk to life, health or safety of children, i.e. "significant harm" as defined in Working Together This will be achieved by inclusion in all service literature and specifically addressed in the Agreement to Mediate which each client signs. In addition all mediators in initial assessment meetings will draw clients' attention to this aspect and the service duty to pass information to Children's Services or other relevant child protection agencies if a child is at risk.

3.2 Staff working in a divorce or separation context should be particularly alert to the need to safeguard children who are at risk of domestic violence including harm from witnessing the ill-treatment of another.

3.3 **Safeguarding procedures for direct work with parents and children**

a. A mediator must distinguish between an individual parent's safeguarding concerns and those of the mediator. If an individual parent expresses a concern then he or she will be advised to report the matter to the relevant local authority Children's Services and the Mediation Service must check that this has taken place (within the same working day or by 10am the following morning).

b. If a worker has direct concerns then he or she must consult with the service director Sheena Adam, regarding any child protection or safeguarding concern

unless it is impractical to do so. If no senior member of staff is available for consultation then advice should be sought from the local authority Children's Services duty worker.or the NSPCC helpline calling 0808 800 5000, emailing help@NSPCC.org.uk or completing our report abuse online form.

If a child is in imminent danger then contact the Police by dialing 999

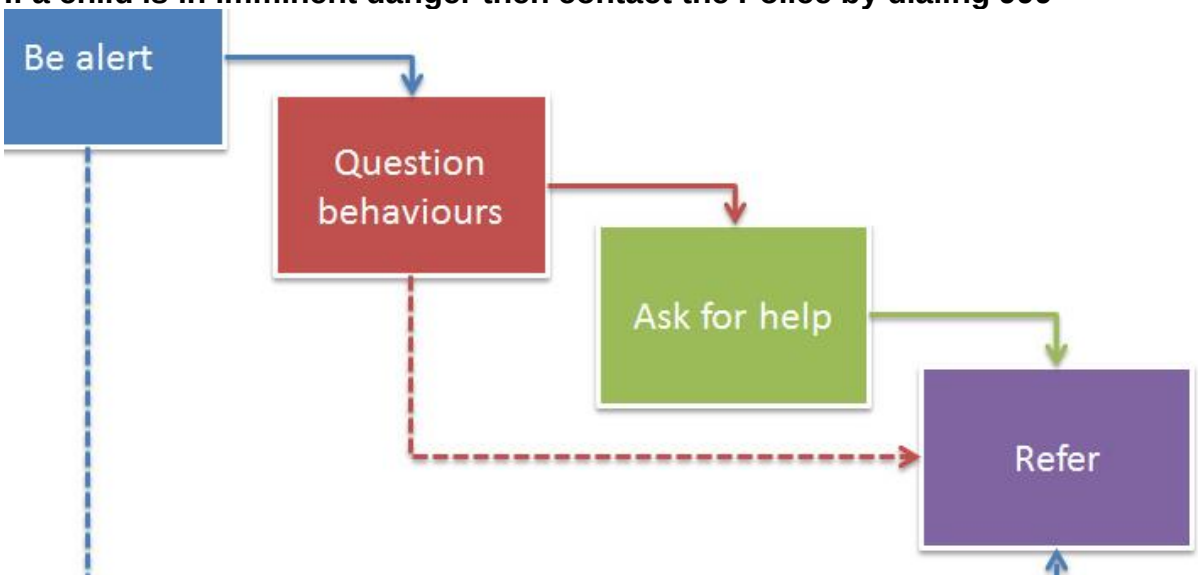

Diagram from Working Together(2015)

If a mediator in the course of his or her work encounters a child in a situation where the child is in imminent danger s/he should act immediately to secure the safety of the child through contact with Children's Services, Police or health professionals.

d. In general the worker should discuss concerns with the family and inform the parents/carers that he/she is going to make a referral to Children's Services unless by delay, or the behavioural response it is likely to prompt, it places the child at risk of significant harm or if it could compromise a future investigation e.g. an investigation into an allegation or suspicion of sexual abuse.

e. The worker must refer any concerns about child abuse or neglect to Children's Services or the police. Child protection referrals must take priority over all other procedures and considerations such as data protection and confidentiality. Whilst it is normal best practice to seek permission of parents before sharing such information with other agencies it is acceptable not to do so if a child is at immediate risk (*Information sharing guidance)*. This contact should be initially be telephone and then confirmed in writing within 24 hours).

f. Wherever practical the mediator should explain what actions he/she must take in a way which is appropriate to the age and understanding of the child or young person and if the child or young person can understand, ask for his or her view.

1.4 Any issues concerning child protection and safeguarding must be carefully and fully recorded provide all relevant information concerning the child protection issue, including:

- contact details of person referring
- service details
- details of the child(ren) including full names and date of birth
- details of those with parental responsibility(where known)
- a request for acknowledgement of receipt within 48 hours

1.5 This will include both a record on the case file and completion of the central record of Actions where there are child protection/safeguarding concerns(attached).

1.6 The Service must follow up any child protection referrals to ensure that they have been received and acted upon.

Mediation will not proceed/continue until information has been obtained from

CHILD PROTECTION/SAFEGUARDING CENTRAL RECORD OF ACTIONS

Date	Case no	Child's name	DoB	Reason for concern	Actions taken (date, who contacted etc

Key Contacts

Sheena Adam DSL tel 07885734456 at any time
NSPCC helpline 0808 800 5000